

NATO IS BUILDING NEW DATA CENTER

Brussels Agency to Collate
Intelligence Information

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LONDON, May 15 — In a quiet suburb of Brussels, an intelligence center is taking shape for the use of ambassadorial representatives in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

If construction schedules are met, the center at Evere should be ready about the middle of October. Data on military and political activity in the Soviet bloc, gathered by such means as spy satellites and foreign agents, will flow into computers at Evere for collation and display on large, flashing wall panels.

A communications net that is to be tied into a North Atlantic communications-satellite system is aimed at allowing the ambassadors to relay such information rapidly to their capitals.

The purpose of this intelligence center, or situation room, is to provide the political leaders of the alliance an opportunity to keep abreast of a heightening crisis as it develops, so that consultation among governments could take place without delay.

One high American military planner said:

"We in the military have to keep up, on a day-to-day basis, with signs of enemy build-up. If the enemy moves a division toward the frontier, or issues live ammunition to its border troops, or if key satellite political and military leaders rush some place for a war council during troubled times, we stay on top of it."

"In the past, top national leaders have often not been informed of all the details until the crisis was upon them. Then they had to be brought up-to-date on 10 days of activity in one hour. The situation room is designed to keep political leaders of NATO informed at all times."

Other Steps Listed

But beyond this objective, an important side effect, according to one official, is to persuade the members of the alliance that "they're being brought in to the inner circle, being provided information that they would not otherwise be privy to."

Seen in that perspective, the intelligence center is one of a series of steps, being taken or planned, that serve to heighten interest in keeping the alliance alive. These steps became apparent in several weeks of reporting and talks with American and other diplomatic and military officials in Washington, Paris, Brussels, Bonn, Naples and London.

Among the steps being taken are these:

• A communications satellite system eventually linking all the capitals with one another and with military commands. The system will provide faster communications, freer of interference than present systems, technical experts say.

• Activities of the nuclear planning group in which seven alliance members — Canada, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Britain and the United States — grapple with nuclear strategy issues. Some of their reports are circulated among other members of the alliance and presumably will become the basis for changes in positions on nuclear questions.

• Naval task forces, one for the Atlantic and one the Mediterranean, that would remain under joint military command even in peacetime to rush to either of the alliance's flanks in the event of trouble.

"When the Russians were being nasty, common fear provided the unifying element," said an American official. "Now, when the fear is fast diminishing, we hope common interests will keep the alliance alive."

Some Data Withheld

But while the idea of an intelligence center was uniformly welcomed, one American official cautioned that there would be a disappointment once it started functioning.

"We're not going to feed in raw intelligence from satellites," he said. "There is some information we wouldn't want to get out, particularly among many governments, some of which may not have the best security precautions in the world."

"So we'll be selective in the kind of information we provide and in the amount of detail. For most of these governments, it'll still be more information than they normally get now, but there may be some grumbling about holding back."

Another official made clear that the new intelligence and communications system did not mean that the United States was about to put issues such as the possible use of nuclear weapons up for vote.

"But we will be in a position to get alliance opinions and suggestions before such decisions are made," he said.

Qualified sources said intelligence would be fed into the situation room from all intelligence agencies within the Atlantic alliance.

United States intelligence information would pass through American channels to Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, commander of American forces in Europe, based at Casteau, Belgium. General Lemnitzer is also commander of all North Atlantic forces in Europe.

He and his staff would decide what intelligence in American channels should be transmitted to the situation room. Presumably other nations will handle the situation similarly.

"Even if we don't share every scrap of data alliance-wide," said one officer, "you can imagine how much useful information will be turned up by the combined intelligence agencies of more than a dozen nations. It should be quite impressive."